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BACKGROUND--AFGHANISTAN:  
DEVELOPMENT OF PERSIAN GULF PORT

- I. Development of the Persian Gulp port of Chahbajar (a natural harbor, a few miles within Iran near western border of Pakistan) offers a possible alternative to present dilemma of Afghan trade routes.
- A. Afghans are presently favoring trans-USSR routes over traditional trans-Pakistan route (see map) which is subject to interruption at whim of Pak Gov't.
- B. Although natural harbor probably could be developed without great difficulty, another factor is that present 400-mile road through Western Iran to Afghan border is little better than caravan trail, would need substantial engineering.
- II. However, such development would definitely serve interests of Iran, both in terms of aiding economic progress of its West and by providing good route for marketing of Iranian POL in Afghanistan.
- A. Advantages for Afghanistan, in addition to providing possible alternative to either trans-USSR or Trans-Pakistan trade routes, would be:
1. Access to Iranian (as opposed to Soviet) POL.
  2. A direct route to Helmand Valley development area, Afghanistan's major area of economic development.
- III. Although US strategic interests would be well served by nothing more than Afghan acceptance of the Chahbahar alternative (with a consequent diminishment in Afghan dependence on Soviet trade routes and POL), this port could also serve as a valuable adjunct to MEDO facilities in the area.

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